

Curriculum Leadership Institute E-Hint

Motivating Students for High-Stakes Testing

Whether we agree with the *No Child Left Behind* legislation or not, the fact remains that we want our students to perform well on our state tests each year. This isn't only to enable our school and district to "make" AYP. It's because we want our students to do well! And like many of you, we believe that the best motivation for students to do well is for them to know their material. (Why not perform well if I know the answers?) However, we also acknowledge that we are all human and having incentives to do well can help us care about a task even more. So to that end, we offer the following list of incentive ideas. These ideas were collected from schools across Kansas. We hope that you might be able to use one or more as *a part* of your total improvement plan.

Ideas that involve the whole school or community:

- Snacks, juice, and/or bottles of water provided or allowed during testing.
- "Good luck" letters from principal, PTO, board, or other students.
- Use PTO funds to help provide rewards, and Site Councils to enlist support.
- Hang poster-size graphs to show how school compared last year to other schools in league/area. Include goals for the current year.
- Write newspaper articles and school newsletters on test preparation practices. Share websites for testing strategies and list other things parents should know for their students to be prepared for the testing periods.
- Make posters for downtown businesses and for school hallways encouraging students and wishing them good luck.
- Designate specific days to do testing rather than having teachers schedule within their classes. This provides an atmosphere that is more apt to say, "This is important."
- Print testing dates on the school calendar and show on local cable channel.
- Have testing days begin with a special breakfast and/or pep rallies, assemblies, talks, or music to set the tone.
- Have students wear buttons or bracelets on testing days that have slogans to encourage or lighten the mood, such as "Beat the Test"... "Shake Your Brain"... "If You're Testing You're Not Getting Homework!"
- After results come in, make banners for public display (such as if school is designated "School of Excellence"). Years can be added to the banner for future designations.

Rewards for students:

- Recognition at a home basketball or football game, such as having name read and crossing the court or football field to receive a certificate from principals or board members. Parents could be included in this as well (with free admission).
- Awards banquets, potluck suppers, and/or all-school assemblies recognizing students in top categories.
- Letters home to parents, including some type of certificate.
- Individual or class rewards such as pizzas, slushies, ice cream sundaes, extra recess time, pencils, gourmet coffee, stickers, movies passes, t-shirts, pop, gift cards for downloading music.
- Picture in the newspaper.
- Special seating at lunch or special parking area.
- Additional lunch time.
- Exempt from final(s).
- Early dismissal at end of year.
- A number of raffle tickets earned for scoring in each category with prizes funded by PTO.
- Each day of testing a student has the chance to earn three tickets: one for attendance, one for working/staying on task, one for highlighting passages or doing calculations in the test booklet. Each day of testing, the tickets are put into a drawing and three winners are chosen from each grade. The prize is a \$5.00 bill for each winner each day.
- Special field trips or other fun activities for an entire classroom that does well.
- Movie for all students who stayed on task for the entire testing time.

(Note: Usually the rewards were given to individuals who moved up a category or scored "exemplary." They could also be given for behavior during testing.)